

CLAIMS

1. A method of forming a decoding device to enable hidden information or indicia on an article to be revealed, the 5 method comprising electronically transferring data defining the decoding device from a central source to a remote site, and creating the decoding device at the remote site using the transmitted data.
2. A method according to claim 1, wherein the article 10 comprises an article of value such as a document, for example selected from the group of banknotes, fiscal stamps, certificates of authenticity, cheques, bonds, retail vouchers, postage stamps, passports, identity documents, and travellers cheques.
3. A method according to claim 1 or claim 2, wherein the 15 central source comprises a database.
4. A method according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the data defines one or more of the colour or black and white content of a decoding image, a line structure, or 20 a 3-D structure.
5. A method according to claim 4, wherein the data defines the colour or black and white content of the decoding device in the form of pixel data or vector data.
6. A method according to any of the preceding claims, 25 wherein the decoding device comprises one or more of an optical filter, a line or dot pattern, coloured filter, curved line structure, concentric circles, geometric figures, microlens arrays, lenticular screens, lenses and Fresnel lenses.
7. A method according to any of the preceding claims, 30 wherein the step of creating the decoding device comprises printing, engraving or ablating the decoding device on a record medium.
8. A method according to claim 7, wherein the record 35 medium comprises paper or plastic.
9. A method according to claim 7 or claim 8, wherein the record medium is transparent.

10. A method according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the creating step is carried out by one of an ink jet printer, laser printer, 3D ink jet printing device, laser engraver, laser marker, laser ablating device, laser 5 cutter, fax machine, commercial ink jet, digital press, conventional press or computer operated machine.

11. A method according to any of claims 1 to 6, wherein the step of creating the decoding device comprises displaying the decoding device on a display screen, such as 10 a high resolution display screen, monitor or high intensity display.

12. A method according to claim 11, wherein the transferred data defines a decoding device whose appearance varies with time.

15 13. A method according to claim 12, wherein the variation is one or more of colour, the pitch and/or widths of lines, the pitch or diameter of dots, or the geometry of the image.

20 14. A method according to any of claims 11 to 13, wherein the display screen is provided in a portable device such as a mobile telephone or PDA.

25 15. A method according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the data is transmitted by one or more of the Internet, satellite, cable, PSTN and mobile telephone networks.

16. A method according to any of the preceding claims, further comprising supplying access control data to the central source to enable the data to be accessed.

30 17. A method according to claim 16, wherein the access control data comprises a PIN, password, digital certificate, biometric data, or a serial number of the article.

18. A method according to claim 16, wherein the access control data comprises an image of or on the article.

35 19. A method according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the central source is adapted to transfer data

defining decoding devices corresponding to different levels of security.

20. A method according to claim 19, wherein the level of security of the transferred decoding device is determined 5 in accordance with the identity of the remote site.

21. A method according to any of the preceding claims, further comprising recording details of the identity of a user at a remote site requesting data from the central source.

10 22. A decoding device which has been formed by a method according to any of claims 1 to 21.

23. A method of checking the validity of a security device on an article, the method comprising forming a decoding device at a remote site using data transferred 15 electronically from a central source; and viewing the decoding device in association with the security device to validate the security device.

24. A method according to claim 23, wherein the article comprises an article of value such as a document, for 20 example selected from the group of banknotes, fiscal stamps, certificates of authenticity, cheques, bonds, retail vouchers, postage stamps, passports, identity documents, and travellers cheques.

25. A method according to claim 23 or claim 24, wherein the security device comprises a hidden code not readily 25 visible to the naked eye.

26. A method according to any of claims 23 to 25, wherein the security device comprises one or more of an array of 30 dots, scrambled indicia, line pattern and metameric feature.

27. A method according to any of claims 23 to 26, wherein the decoding device is formed on a transparent substrate and is placed over the security device to validate it.

28. A method according to any of claims 23 to 27, wherein 35 the forming step is carried out in accordance with any of claims 1 to 21.

29. A decoding device forming system comprising a central source for providing data defining a decoding device to enable hidden information or indicia on an article to be revealed; a transmission system for transmitting data from 5 the central source to a remote site; and a creation system at the remote site for creating the decoding device using the transmitted data.

30. A system according to claim 29, wherein the creation system comprises one of an ink jet printer, laser printer, 10 3D ink jet printing device, laser engraver, laser marker, laser ablating device, laser cutter, fax machine, commercial ink jet, digital press, conventional press or computer operated machine or a display screen, such as a high resolution display screen, monitor or high intensity 15 display.

31. A system according to claim 29 or claim 30, wherein the central source comprises a database.

32. A system according to any of claims 29 to 31, further comprising a processor located at the central source for 20 controlling access to data in the central source.

33. A system according to any of claims 29 to 32, wherein the decoding device comprises an image or indicia which, when viewed in association with a security device, reveals hidden information or indicia within the security device.

25 34. A system according to any of claims 29 to 33, adapted to carry out a method according to any of claims 1 to 21.

35. A decoding device supply system comprising a central source for supplying data defining a decoding device to enable hidden information or indicia on an article to be 30 revealed, to one or more remote sites.

36. A system according to claim 35, wherein the central source comprises a database.